

# **Evolution of Tourism in Cultural Destinations: An Application of The TALC Model to Leh (Ladakh)**

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## **Abstract:**

Tourism Area Life Cycle is now almost four decades old. However, it still holds applicability in tourism planning and forecasting. The model has been tested in a variety of settings e.g. Mountain, beaches, islands, coastal resorts destinations, etc. has proved to be a success in explaining tourism development in these areas. However, the present study tries to apply the model on Leh (Ladakh), a cultural destination of the Trans Himalayan Region. It analyses, in light of the model, various changes that have occurred in the destination as it moved from the exploration stage to the subsequent stages. From the analysis of both primary and secondary data, it was found that Leh district is presently in the development stage. It was also found that tourism development in Leh seems to be in tune with the stages of the model.

**Keywords:** Tourism development, TALC Model, Cultural Destination, Host Perception

## **Introduction**

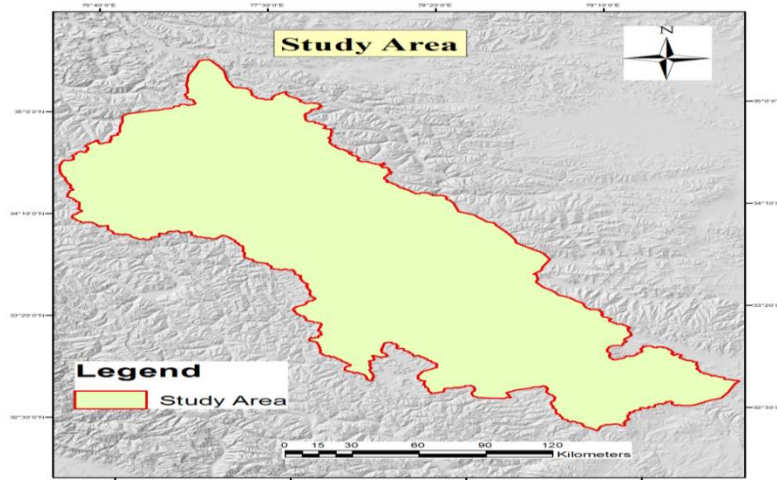
Tourism and travel have been part of the human experience from its existence on the earth's surface. The humans first travel in the form of nomads (Stephen L. J. Smith, 2004). In recent decades the growth and expansion of the industry is a highly complex experience that needs multiple disciplinary approaches to study (Ritchie & Crouch, 2004). Tourism is believed to be the main instrument for regional development for many countries as it rouses new economic activities (Salvo, C. and Giulio, Q, 2003). During recent years tourism has been identified by developing countries as their substance for economic development by observing tremendous potential in the form of providing employment and foreign exchange earnings (Kala, 2008). Growth and development of a tourism destination are believed to happen in

different stages starting from its infancy stages to mature. During the literature survey, it was found that there is a number of methods used for the evaluation of the development of a particular tourism destination. The tourism area life cycle model is one of the worldly accepted models of destination growth (Butler, 2004). The model proposed six main stages of development of a tourist destination, these are, Exploration, Involvement, Development, Consolidation, Stagnation, and Post-Stagnation. The theoretical framework of the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) has been frequently examined by different researchers in different time periods since it was first proposed by Butler in 1980. The work of Gary Hovinen (1981) on Lancaster County, Pennsylvania is likely the first work that uses Butler's Model in his research work. The recent revised two volumes on the model (Butler, 2006a, 2006b) further highlight its importance in the field of tourism studies (Zhong, L., et al., 2007). After 1980, a number of researchers have applied the TALC on different destinations and check its applicability and usefulness. Since then, the model has earned acceptance, modifications as well as criticism from a number of researchers. Butler (2004) comments, "as versions and adaptations of the model are still appearing in contemporary publications, it is clear that the model continues to have relevance in the current tourism scene." J. Malcolm-Davies (2005) in her paper 'The TALC and Heritage Sites' suggests that cultural sites are being produced as tourism products and their growth and development could also be measured with the help of TALC. Johnson and Snepenger (2006) also stressed that research should be conducted on different economic transitions which could deliver valuable insight into the changing nature of tourism impacts and destination development processes". Special consideration should be on those areas in which the tourism area life cycle is believed to not be applied especially in destinations of developing countries (Zhong, L., et al., 2007). Agarwal (1997) pointed out that research on the tourism life cycle model should focus on either one of two aspects: (a) applicability testing of the model and (b) improving the model to include different issues. One of the main issues of tourist destinations has been the attitude of hosts towards the tourism industry. This attitude was also a result of a number of researches that sketched attention to the social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism in general (for example, de Kadt, 1979; Turner & Ash, 1975; Young, 1973). This study has been drawn in line with the approach adopted by Zhong, L., et al., (2007) while studying the applicability of TALC to Zhangjiajie National Forest Park in China. The present research tries to evaluate the tourism growth and development in Leh by applying the Tourism area life cycle model, and try to analyse the

different dimensions which could affect the growth and development of tourism in the area and try to find out in which stage the area is falling in the TALC model. Ioannides (1992).

**Study Area**

Leh (Ladakh) is situated between 32<sup>0</sup> to 36<sup>0</sup> North latitude and 72<sup>0</sup> to 80<sup>0</sup> East longitudes and having altitude ranging from 2900 meters to 5900 meters above sea level (Kapur, 1987).



**Figure. 1. Map of Leh District**

According to Fewkes, (2009) Ladakh has many nicknames, such as ‘the Moon land’, ‘Little Tibet’, ‘the last Shangri-La’ and ‘Roof of the World’. While as Norberg-Hodge (1997) aptly described it as ‘a harsh and mountainous desert of wild beauty, set among the jagged peaks of western Himalayas’. Leh District is having an area of 45,100 Km<sup>2</sup> and is the second largest district in India after Kutch (Gujarat) (45652 Km<sup>2</sup>). The district is bounded in the West by Pakistan administered Kashmir, in the North and East by China and in the southeast by Lahul Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh in the South East. Leh is culturally rich. Traditions and rituals have remained intact to a large extent. Besides the natural landscape, this region is rich in its architecture, monasteries, housing patterns, food habits, and the dress and clothing patterns. The natural landscapes are favorable for mountaineering and trekking. The cold desert area distinguishes it from the rest of the region. There are some famous tourist places like Leh Palace, Shanti Stupa, Central Asian Museum, Jamia Masjid, Old historic buildings, Stupas, Monasteries, Forts, Chortains, etc



Figure 2. Cultural sites Shanti Stupa and Hemis Gumpa

## Methodology:-

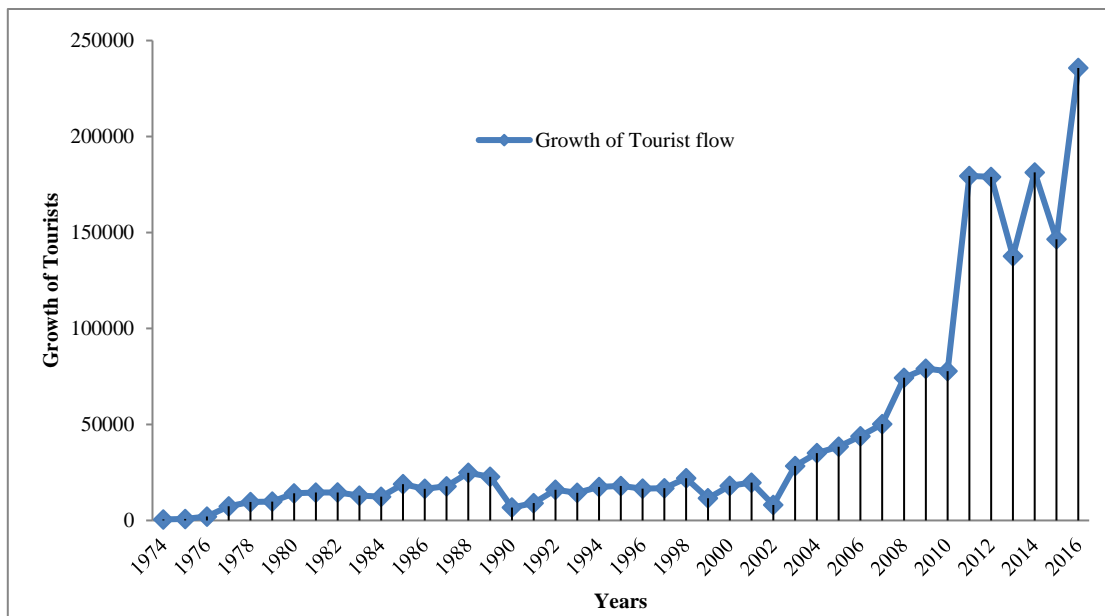
The aim of the present paper was to analyse the evolution of tourism in Leh district with the help of the tourism area life cycle model. A number of data sets or indicators were used to study this evolution. These include: the growth of tourist flow, growth of tourism infrastructure, the contribution of tourism to the local economy and host perception about the tourism industry. Similar methodology were used in Cyprus and the same indicators i.e. numbers of tourists visited the place, Number of Hotels and bed capacity, the type of accommodation available, etc. (Lagiewski, R, 2006). The data has been collected through both primary as well as secondary sources, which include reports, journals, books, questionnaire surveys, etc. The methodology adopted in the present study includes the preparation of a base map of the study area from SOI top sheet of scale 1:50000. Data about tourist flow, tourist infrastructure like hotels, guest houses, restaurants, number of vehicles, etc. were collected from the Department of Tourism and Regional Transport Office, Leh. A questionnaire survey was also undertaken from August to October of 2016 to analyse how much tourism is contributing towards the economy of Leh and gather the perception of the host population about the impacts of tourism industry on their livelihood and changes that took place with the development of tourism. The data has been analyzed using SPSS software and interpreted with the help of suitable cartographic and statistical techniques such as bar graphs, and line graphs.

## Results and Discussion:

Development of tourism in Ladakh dates back to 1600 A.D, when the first western traveler, a Portuguese, named Diogod Almeria reached Ladakh despite its remoteness, Ladakh has been visited by a surprisingly large number of explorers. They can be credited as the pioneers who founded the base of tourism in this region. Subsequently, in real sense, they paved

the way for modern tourism in Ladakh. Antonio de Andrado, a Jesuit father entered into Ladakh in 1624. Seven years later in 1631, Jesuit missionaries namely father Francesco de Azevedo and Giovanni – de – Oliviro reached here from Tsaparang (Jina 1994). The area was first time open for tourism activities in the year 1974 and in the first year 524 tourists visited these places. A close examination and analysis of the trend followed by tourist arrivals from 1974 reveal that tourism in Leh also seems to be going through stages similar to the ones proposed by Butler in his Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) Model. The tourism industry in Leh is only about 44 years old, which is a relatively short time for the complete applicability of the TALC model. However, one can distinguish the initial stages based on the path followed by tourism in the region.

**Fig. 2. Growth of Tourist Flow to Leh (1975-2016)**



Source: Department of Tourism, Leh

**Table. 1. Stages of Tourism Development in Leh**

Stage of Tourism Development	Period (Year)	Total arrivals	Average Tourist Arrivals
Exploration	1974-1980	41139	5877
Involvement	1981-2003	267480	11630

<b>Development</b>	<b>2004 onwards</b>	<b>435247</b>	<b>39568</b>
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**1. Exploration Stage**

In 1947, India got independence. However, immediately after partition took place, Ladakh became part of the Indian state, while its neighbor Baltistan came under Pakistan. Consequently, the ancient east-west trade through the silk route was closed. Because of political instability and the sensitive location of the area along Indo-China and Indo-Pakistan borders, the area remained closed for tourists until 1974. It was only in 1974 when the Government of India decided that Ladakh should be opened for tourists. Rev. Kushok Bakula, the then M.P. from Ladakh recommended Syed Mir Qasim the then Chief Minister of Jammu And Kashmir State to throw open Ladakh to tourists, in the interest of its development. He, therefore, in consultation with the Govt. of India in 1974 declared Ladakh open for foreigners by road. Prior to the opening of the Leh road to tourists, he declared Jina (1994),

*“Ladakh enjoys a unique distinction in the country not only because of its rich cultural heritage. There is no other place in the country, where Buddhism still exists in the same undistorted form as it does in Ladakh, as original as it could have been in the third quarter of the twentieth century. Gompa, of which, there are many in Ladakh, is a unique institution and thousands of our countrymen would seize the first opportunity to visit this area if it is thrown open to tourists.”*

The government of India also admitted that tourism is an important tool for the development of a backward region like Ladakh. Since then, tourism is growing in Ladakh as an industry and contributing substantially to the economy of this backward region. The period from 1974-80 clearly resembles the *exploration* stage of TALC with a very small number of tourists mostly Europeans, mainly from Germany. Air services to Leh did not exist at that time and there were very few accommodation facilities; tourists were accommodated with the local families. Thus, there was a high level of interaction between the tourists and the local residents, which is an important feature of the initial *exploration* stage of a tourism area. The total number of visitors during this phase was 41139 with an average of 5877 visitors. Subsequently, the Government of India allowed air service to Leh. On December 10, 1978, Indian Airlines Boeing 737 aircraft, at last, touched Leh at the height of 10,400 feet above sea level at a

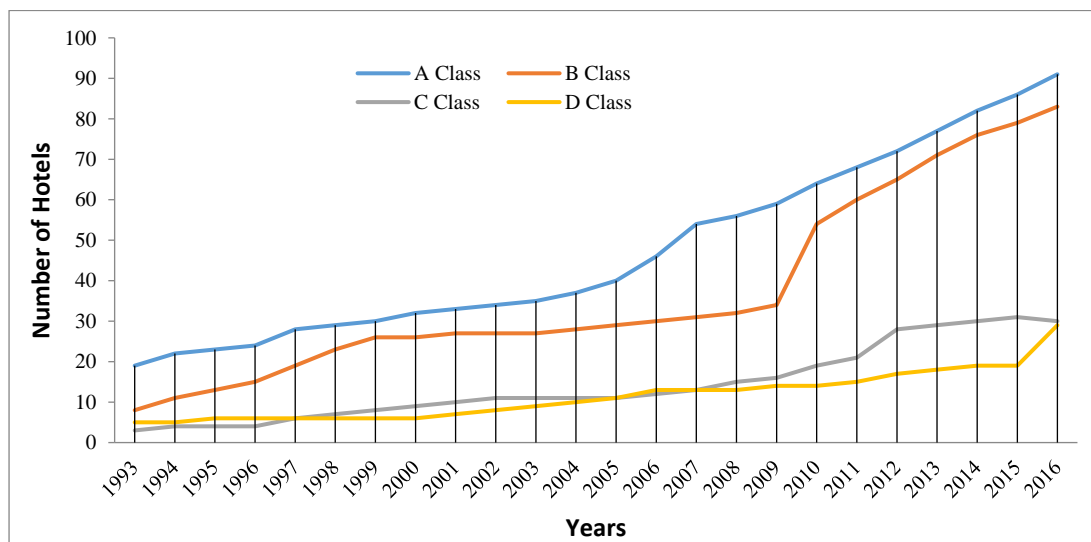
temperature of minus 10 degrees Celsius. This civil aviation milestone was achieved by pilot Capt. Anand Mohan Kapur, the then Director of Operations of the Indian Airlines. In 1979 the Indian Airline, Srinagar -Leh sector was also opened with two flights per week. During winter, it was the only alternative to reach Leh, since the road from the end of October to next June was snowbound and, as Zojila pass was not accessible.

## **2. Involvement Stage**

The period from 1980 onwards resembles a stage of increased involvement among the local residents, with more local residents and households engaging in providing services catering to tourists, as well as a continued increase in the frequency of daily flight services to Leh. As suggested by Butler (1980), that in this stage some organizations will be involved in tourism and travel arrangements and it could be expected first pressures would be on government institutions (Jina, 1994).

The total number of visitors in this phase (1981-2003) reached 267480 and the average number of tourists was 11630, i.e. about 2 times the number of tourists in the exploration stage. The tourist Infrastructure and amenities also increased manifold with an increase in the number of hotels, guest houses, travel agencies, and tourist vehicles. In the initial stage, there were hardly any accommodation facilities. Tourists were accommodated within the local families. In the year 1993, the total number of the hotels was 35 of which 19 belonged to class A, 8 belonged to class B, 3 belonged to C and 5 belonged to the D class. During the period 1993-2011, the total number of hotels reached 144, in which the number of A-class hotels increased to 68, B class hotels increased to 60, C class increased to 21 and the number of D class increased from 5 to 15. Later, as the tourist inflow became more regular, the State Government provided up to 50 percent subsidies for the construction of hotels in order to promote the development of tourism. This led to a significant jump in the number of hotels and guesthouses in the region, which supplemented by the introduction of scheduled air services in 1979, led to the rapid development of tourism (Jina, 1994).

**Fig. 4. Growth of Hotel Accommodation units in Leh District from 1993 to 2016**



Source: - Department of Tourism, Leh

### 3. Development Stage

After a periodic slump in arrivals in the year 2002, owing to international socio-political instability, the numbers rapidly picked up in 2003 and continued to increase at a much higher rate than ever before. Leh started getting more promotion as a travel destination and the unique natural environment and cultural heritage was more specifically marketed as its strength. This period also saw a more rapid change in the region’s infrastructure such as roads connecting the remotest villages. After 2002, there was a significant increase in the tourist flow, in terms of both foreign as well as domestic tourists. The even steeper increase after 2006 is attributed to the large increases in the inflow of domestic tourists. This sudden increase in the number of Indian visitors could be attributed to a lot of factors, like increase in service consumption, increase in the number and frequency of flights to Leh, the introduction of cheaper tour packages by online travel businesses or due to the increasing number of Indian films being shot at different touristic locations in Ladakh. During the field survey, it was found that the more than two-fold increase in tourist flow from a total of 77,800 tourists in 2010 to 179,491 tourists in 2011 was credited to the extremely successful 2009 Bollywood film *3 Idiots*, parts of which were shot in Ladakh.

The total number of tourist arrivals from 2003-2016 was 435247 and the average number of tourists was 39568. In the year 2011, the number of tourists exceeded the district’s permanent local population for the first time. In 1993, the number of travel agencies was 17, which increased to 309 in 2011 showing a growth rate of 1817%. All these events are characteristic of the development stage of a tourist area suggesting that Leh is currently in the

development stage of the tourist area life cycle (TALC) model. It is not yet possible to determine whether the tourism trend is approaching the consolidation stage. The development stage might continue for several years or more until the region's natural capacity is reached.

### **Perception of Host Population about Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism**

The tourism industry plays a huge impact on host communities. Indeed, destination communities face something of a 'development dilemma' (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008); they are, in a sense, required to engage in a trade-off between the benefits they perceive to receive from tourism and the negative social and environmental consequences of its development (Sharpley, R., 2013). In view of this, the present authors have also conducted a survey in the Leh district in the year 2016 to highlight the perception of the host population about the tourism industry. A total of five hundred households were selected for the survey. Before taking their perception an attempt was made to analyse the association of people with the tourism industry. The results show that the majority of the population is associated directly or indirectly with tourism. 31% were directly associated with tourism, 51% were associated indirectly and 18% were neither directly associated nor indirectly. The sample, however, was not fully representative in terms of gender as only 19% were females and 81% were males.

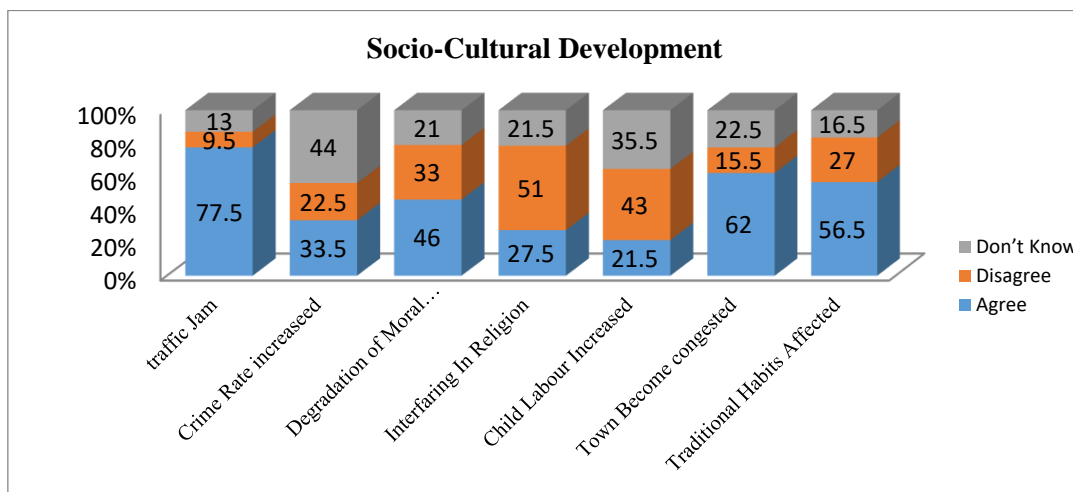
### **Impact of Tourism on Education**

About 66% believed that there is a positive impact of tourism on education which can be justified with the reduction in the total number of dropouts from school, being 123 during the year 2004-2005 and only 9 during 2011-2012 (CEO Leh). However, those who said that tourism has a negative impact (21%) on tourism believe that a good number of the youth are not able to complete their studies as they join the tourism industry in the early stage of their career as waiters, receptionists, tourist guides, etc. 13% said they have no idea in this regard.

### **Socio-Cultural Impact**

Seven main indicators were selected for measuring socio-cultural impacts. These include traffic jams, degradation of moral values, crime rate increase, interference in religion, child labor increase, congestion of the town and effect on the traditional habits.

**Fig. 11. Socio-Cultural Impact of tourism**



Source: - Field Survey (2012)

### Conclusion

From the analysis of the data, it was found that Leh is in the development stage of TALC. The area is now widely recognized as a tourist destination world over because of advertisement and promotion efforts of government and other private tour operates. Consequently more cultural attractions and world-class accommodation facilities developed to supplement the original attraction. It was found that the local people are now facing a lot of problems by losing their control in the development of the area, the increasing traffic creates traffic jam and pollution, the moral values get affect, tradition habits get also affected by the increasing tourism activities in this region, the crime rate is also increased. Apart from these factors the growth and development of Leh also get effects by the political disturbances in the region like tourism in Ladakh saw a set back during the years 1984 to 1986, 1989, 1990, 1999 and 2002 due to political turmoil in and around the region. As a result, the security of tourists was also at stake. However, the government has taken various measures from time to time to develop Leh as a tourist destination. The introduction of direct flights from Delhi to Leh, Chandigarh to Leh and Jammu to Leh and opening of Leh-Manali road were steps in this direction. Leh has already passed the first two stages of TALC (exploration, involvement) and is now in the third stage i.e. development. Leh needs to manage its tourism industry sustainably to avoid the risk of losing its cultural identity and facing a declining trend of tourism. Butler (2006) points out that the basic assumption of his original model was not the inevitability of decline regardless of intervention but the inevitable loss of quality in the absence of management. The current tourism dynamics of Leh point to a rapid change in the social, cultural, economic and environmental spheres. It can, thus be predicted that the subsequent stages of tourism

development are not very far in absence of, as Butler (2006) suggests, skillful planning from the beginning, appropriate management, including the identification of limits to growth, the setting of realistic targets, appropriate change in response to and in anticipation of market shifts, and good fortune, all essential to ensure a destination a long and successful life.

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